



Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant Applications Now Available for 2020

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MADISON – Wisconsin farmer-led groups can apply for 2020 Producer-Led Watershed Protection grants through Friday, Aug. 23.

“The producer-led program is a great tool to protect water quality in the state, and is especially important in this Year of Clean Drinking Water,” says Governor Tony Evers. “It’s been very successful in creating new, local efforts, with neighbors helping neighbors find ways to protect our surface and groundwater.”

DATCP will award grants to producer-led groups that focus on ways to prevent and reduce runoff from farm fields and farmsteads. Each group is eligible for up to \$40,000 a year. Applicants must find or contribute matching funds at least equal to the grant request.

The grants are intended to help farmers find solutions best suited for their particular watersheds, based on topography, soil type, types of operations and other factors that differ among regions of the state and work to increase farmer participation in these voluntary efforts.

“The budget Governor Evers signed provides \$750,000 in each of the next two years for grants, and we know our producers will come forward again with good, useful ideas to practice conservation that fits their local needs and conditions,” added DATCP Secretary-designee Brad Pfaff. “The strength of Wisconsin agriculture is in the way our farmers have adapted to our varied landscape, and that’s also the strength of this program.”

Applicants must be groups of at least five farmers whose farms are in the same watershed. Each farm must have produced at least \$6,000 in gross farm revenue last year, or \$18,000 over the past three years. Each group must partner with a county land conservation committee, the University of Wisconsin-Extension, or a nonprofit conservation organization, and work with other producers in the watershed to protect surface and groundwater. Both newly formed and established groups may apply.

Since the Producer-Led grants first became available in 2015, DATCP has awarded about \$2 million to 28 groups in watersheds across the state. Groups have focused on cover crops, education and field trials, offering incentive payments to try conservation practices, conferences and field days, and gathering baseline data on soil health and water quality. Grant funds cannot pay for real estate, loans, equipment purchases, or lobbying.

Application materials are available at

https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/ProducerLedProjects.aspx. Applications will be accepted only via email in Microsoft Word format. The application deadline is Friday, Aug. 23. Farmers with questions should contact Rachel Rushmann, rachel.rushmann@wi.gov, (608) 224-4622.

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